

(WASHINGTON, DC) - Congressman Chet Edwards announced that he has secured funding that will help Johnson County crack down on crime, continue improvements to Ham Creek Park, renovate the Cleburne Layland Museum, and support after school tutoring. The funding was included by Edwards in the final 2009 Appropriations bill, which passed the House Wednesday by a vote of 245 to 178. Local law enforcement efforts to slow the spread of illegal drugs in Johnson County under the Stop the Offender Program (STOP) will be funded by the \$200,000 included by Edwards in the bill.

"As the father of two young sons, I am deeply committed to doing everything possible to protect our children from the devastation of illegal drugs," said Edwards, a senior member of the Appropriations Committee. "These funds will help our law enforcement officers arrest drug dealers, and keep our children safe."

STOP is an undercover joint law enforcement effort whose objective is to stop the spread of drugs in Johnson County. In 2004, Johnson County set up its own STOP unit after a state-sponsored multi-county task force was disbanded despite the success of the task force. After assessing the program's effectiveness, Edwards worked to secure federal funds to keep this vital law enforcement program operating for the safety of our Johnson County children and families. When this bill becomes law, Edwards will have secured \$488,000 since 2005. This funding has enabled STOP program to make 172 arrests and confiscate \$1.2 million worth of illegal drugs.

"Our goal is to put drug dealers in jail and to send out a clear message that they will be tracked down and prosecuted if they try to sell drugs in Johnson County," said Edwards. "STOP and its successes would not have been possible had it not been for the leadership of Sheriff Bob Alford, Johnson County District Attorney Dale Hanna, STOP Commander Adam King, and our local police chiefs. They and the courageous undercover agents who take risks every day to take drug dealers off our streets deserve our heartfelt thanks."

"We are thankful that Congressman Edwards supports the STOP Special Crimes Unit's community level mission. The funding that he secured for the unit's operation will help ensure that drug dealers and other serious criminals will not be able to find safe havens in our neighborhoods," said Adam King, Commander, Stop the Offender Program Special Crimes Unit.

Edwards also secured \$400,000 for improvements at Ham Creek Park in Johnson County in the final 2009 Appropriations bill.

"Working with local leaders, I am grateful that we have been successful in securing funds that will move us closer to completing the renovations to Ham Creek Park," said Edwards. "As the father of two young sons, it is gratifying to know that thousands of Johnson County families will be able to enjoy this beautiful new park for years to come."

The Ham Creek Park project has strong local support throughout Johnson County. The county commissioners agreed to fund operations and maintenance costs at the park once the Army Corps of Engineers completes the renovation. The \$400,000 will go toward the final phase of the project, which when completed will open the 191 acre park adding a campground with 35 campsites, restrooms, group shelters, trails, playground and other amenities. Edwards secured \$900,000 in fiscal year 2006, and \$1.2 million in fiscal year 2007, \$1.9 million in fiscal year 2008 for a total of \$4.8 million for Ham Creek to date.

Edwards also secured \$150,000 to renovate Cleburne Layland Museum (Old Carnegie Library) currently in need of a number of renovations, including an addition of an elevator, structural restoration, improved drainage and grounds, and roof replacement. The Layland Museum is housed in the 1905 Cleburne Carnegie Library, now on the National Register of History Places.

Finally, Edwards secured \$71,000 in the bill for the East Cleburne Community Center After School Tutoring Program. The Community Center provides after school tutoring and recreation programs for low income families. This funding would allow the Community Center to offer their tutoring services on extended days and at extended hours, as well as to hire additional teachers and aids.